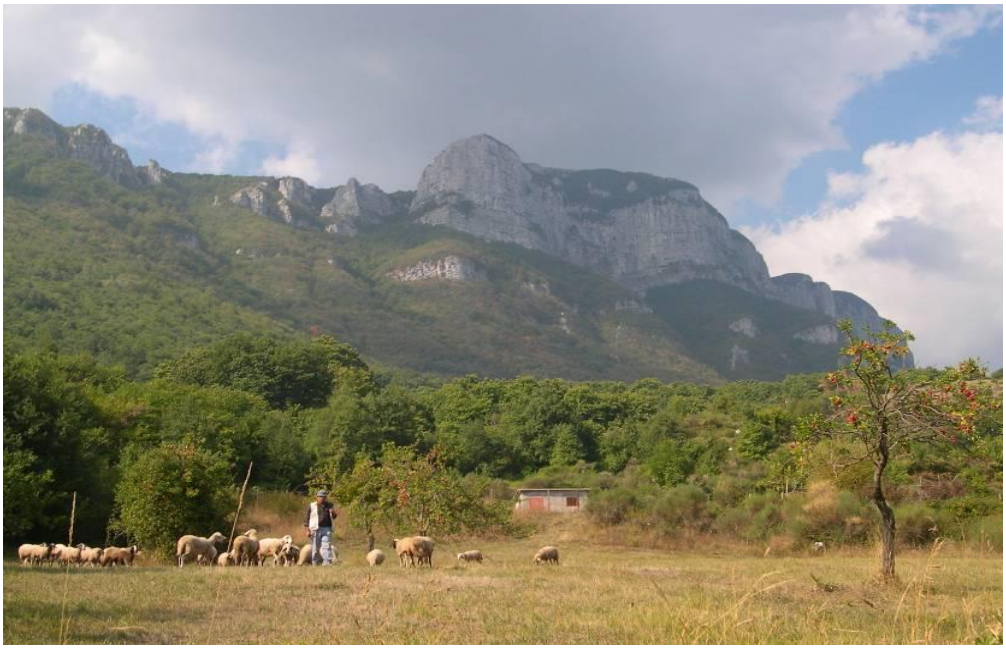
Independent walking tour (CIL1)

The Heart of the Cilento National Park

Through the amazing nature and rural landscapes of the genuine, authentic, southern Italy (9 days)



TRIP NOTES 2024

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INTRODUCTION

The region of Campania marks the real starting point of southern Italy. It has been sought-after since Roman times when it was labelled the Campania Felix, or 'happy land', hardly a surprise considering the fact that it includes the great city of Naples, beautiful countryside, Roman ruins, small islands and stretches of spectacular coast. On the southern side of the Sorrento Peninsula the Costiera Amalfitana is probably one of Europe's most well-known and dramatic stretches of coastline, with its towering cliffs and picturesque coves.

But Campania's real secret is located south of Salerno, and immediately south of the wonderful Greek temples of Paestum. Here the coastline bulges out into an expanse of mountainous landmass known as the Cilento, now one of Italy's biggest National Parks, with World Heritage listing.

This tour brings you into the real ***'Heart of the Cilento'****, the area which perhaps best represents its immense heritage of abundant nature, small hidden treasures, charming medieval villages and of course, ancient footpaths. Inland, the Cilento is largely undisturbed by the 21st century and you will encounter few other tourists along your way.*

You will walk through the canyons of the Calore River, up into the wild Cervati mountain range, and finally onto the impressive Alburni Mountains. You'll enjoy pristine natural areas, like beech and oak forests and mountain meadows, beautiful river valleys, impressive canyons and great mountain scenery. But you will also walk through attractive countryside with vineyards and olive groves and many cultural treasures like rural chapels, ancient farmhouses, old watermills and charming medieval villages.

You'll visit some of the nicest medieval villages in the area, where the traditional way of life is still evident. And you'll enjoy visiting some of the Cilento's greatest cultural treasures, like the cave church of St. Michael, built into the rock near Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, the ruins of Roscigno Vecchia, the pre-historic 'stone warrior' of the Alburni Mountains and the castles of Laurino and Sicignano. And they're all connected by a great walking route.

At the beginning or the end of the tour there is also an opportunity to visit Paestum or Pompeii, or spend some time on the beach. The tour can easily be combined with a journey along the coast of the Cilento or with a tour on the Amalfi Coast.

Please note: this is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, parts of them waymarked. Elsewhere you have to follow the route notes provided together with the maps. Average walking times: from approx. 4 to 6 hours each day.

DAY–TO–DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Felitto

Arrival by train in Capaccio / Paestum (which can easily be reached from Naples). You can visit the amazing Greek temples before being transferred to your agriturismo in the green valley of the Calore River near Felitto (transfer service included). Those travelling by car can leave it here (a transfer service from the last accommodation back to here can be arranged).

Accommodation: Felitto - Agriturismo ***

Day 2 – Roundwalk Felitto & the Calore Canyon

Today you make a circular walk, a good introduction to what the area has to offer, ranging from wild nature to hidden cultural treasures. First you are brought by car to the centre of Felitto, towering high above the green canyon of the Calore River, one of the highlights of the Cilento National Park. An old path leads down from here to the river. First you walk along a beautiful path on the old aqueduct to a picnic area at a small artificial lake, and then you take a path which penetrates into the wildest part of the canyon, one of the most unspoilt areas of the Cilento National Park. The path has several amazing viewpoints overlooking the canyon. You walk past a number of grotto's (in one of which a hermit used to live) and the ruins of watermills. Vegetation is abundant, and in the crystal-clear water there are still otters and trout. Along the route there are several nice spots where you can go for a swim. Then you arrive at a natural bridge over the river, which you cross (it is possible to descend into the canyon here, all the way down to the riverbed). From the bridge the path continues alongside the river, and then, underneath the towering coloured rocks, you arrive at another symbol of the national park: the famous medieval bridge, one of the best preserved in the area, at the other very scenic entrance of the canyon. You walk from here through forest and pretty countryside back to the little artificial lake of Remolino (and perhaps go for a swim) and then to Felitto. From here you can either be picked up, or choose to walk the last stretch back to your agriturismo.

Accommodation: Felitto - Agriturismo ***

Total walking distance: 12 km. Approx. walking time: 4-5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 350 m.

Day 3 – Grava di Vesalo: From Laurino to Piaggine

Today you start the day with a short journey from Felitto to Laurino. You can already see this town from a distance, towering high above the river. Just below the town you start your walk, following the canyon beneath Laurino. After about 30 minutes walking you arrive at a small medieval bridge which leads to the little church of Sant'Elena. From here a good mule track leads into the 'real' mountains, following the spectacular green Soprana Valley. Through thick forests you arrive at a beautiful mountain meadow, with some extensive grazing and ruins of houses. A little further on you can discover one of the most interesting *karst* phenomena in the area: a whole river disappearing into the ground. The way back – again along ancient mule tracks – takes you past some of the most amazing viewpoints in the area. An optional visit brings you to the cave of St. Michael, with a statue of the Archangel at the entrance. From here it's an easy route down to the pretty little village of Valle dell'Angelo, where you can have a drink in the charming village square. You either sleep here, in a *'locanda'*, just above the village square, or in nearby Piaggine. In the evening you eat in a renowned 'Slow Food' restaurant.

Accommodation: Valle dell'Angelo / Piaggine - Locanda / Agriturismo ***

Total walking distance: 15 km. Approx. walking time: 5-6 h. Ascent & descent: + 800 m./- 550 m.

Optional extra day: Gole del Festolaro

You might opt for this extra day in Valle dell'Angelo to recover from the harder walk yesterday and do a short but beautiful walk west of the village. This short walk first takes you from Valle dell'Angelo to the towering village of Laurino, now allowing you some more time to visit. After a visit of this nice little town, you walk into the spectacular gorge of the Festolaro River, a great spot for a relaxed picnic. Then you retrace your steps to the little village of Valle dell' Angelo, and allow some time to relax

Accommodation: Valle dell'Angelo / Piaggine

Total walking distance: 10 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. Ascent & descent: + 800 m./- 550 m.

Day 4 – From the Sammaro Gorge to the 'ghost town' Roscigno Vecchia

You start your walk from Valle dell'Angelo in the direction of Piaggine again. But today, just before reaching the village, you descend into a pretty green valley with maquis, olive groves and orchards, a timeless rural landscape. An age-old footpath brings you to the pretty little town of Sacco, where the cathedral simply must be visited! You then descend along a medieval mule track to the 'sources' of the Sammaro River, which surfaces here after running underground for several kilometres. An ideal spot for a picnic lunch! The path then continues on the other side of the river and brings you to the 'ghost town' of Roscigno Vecchia, also called the *'Pompeii of the 19th century'*. This little village remains exactly as it was at the start of the 20th century when it was abandoned. A beautiful setting, especially at sunset! From Roscigno Vecchia you then walk up to the 'new' village of Roscigno, where you spend the next night. In alternative you walk on through the olive groves to your agriturismo just outside Roscigno.

Accommodation: Roscigno - Country Inn / Agriturismo ***

Total walking distance: 14 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 500 m.

Day 5 – Exploring Monte Pruno

You continue your walk straight from your country inn. From Roscigno you climb up to Monte Pruno, an archaeological site where you can admire the impressive stone walls from the 4th century BC and a number of tombs, as well as find a beautiful viewpoint over the whole area. From here you descend to the quaint little village of Corleto Monforte, a fortified mountain, as the name suggests, with a pretty medieval town centre built on the promontory, overlooking the valley. You then walk along a beautiful ancient mule track, past old watermills and through the olive groves, to Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, one of the most interesting little towns in the area. Here you have time for a drink in the square and then walk the last 500 m. to your beautifully located agriturismo. You'll enjoy dinner in the nice restaurant overlooking the whole valley.

Accommodation: Sant'Angelo a Fasanella - Agriturismo ***

Total walking distance: 14 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. Ascent & descent: + 500 m./- 550 m.

Day 6 – The southern slopes of the Alburni Mountains

Today you make a beautiful roundwalk. First you walk to the town centre of Sant'Angelo, and now take the time to visit the impressive church in St. Michael's cave, certainly one of the most beautiful churches you'll ever see! Then you'll walk down through the medieval streets to the River Fasanella. You follow the river valley along a medieval mule track containing ruins of the old Roman road, and soon reach one of the most picturesque sites of the National Park: the so-called Risorgenza dell'Auso, where the River Auso surfaces, having run underground for several kilometres. The ruins of the medieval watermills and the bridge make the picture complete. From here you walk up to the church of Cardoneto and then along the ancient flight of steps to the nice little village of Ottati.

Then you can choose to either walk or take the local bus back to Sant'Angelo. Or opt for an extra walk through the mountains. You'll enjoy another night and another dinner in your beautiful agriturismo.

Accommodation: Sant'Angelo a Fasanella - Agriturismo ***
Total walking distance: 9-14 km. Approx. walking time: 4-6 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 350 m.

Day 7 – The Alburni high plain & Monte Figliolo

A short transfer brings you to the high plain of the Alburni Mountains, a wild calcareous mountain chain with many caves, huge beech forests and bare rocks, an area where wolves still wander around. You are brought to the beginning of the path which leads to the so-called 'Antece', a prehistoric stone warrior, sculpted into the bare rock. From here you walk along easy mule tracks through the high plains, past several sinkholes. You reach the edge of the mountain plateau at one of the most impressive viewpoints in the area: 'Il Figliolo', a sheer drop of several hundreds of metres and a marvellous site overlooking the plain of Salerno, the sea and the mountains. Then through the beautiful beech forest, along ancient mule tracks, you walk down to Petina, a nice little village where you have time to wander through the old streets of the village centre, before transferring to Sicignano, where you stay in a nice agriturismo (transfer included).

Accommodation: Sicignano degli Alburni - Agriturismo ***
Total walking distance: 12 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. Ascent & descent: + 400 m./- 800 m.

Day 8 – The northern slopes of the Alburni Mountains

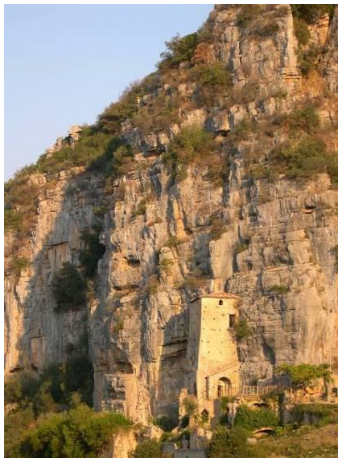
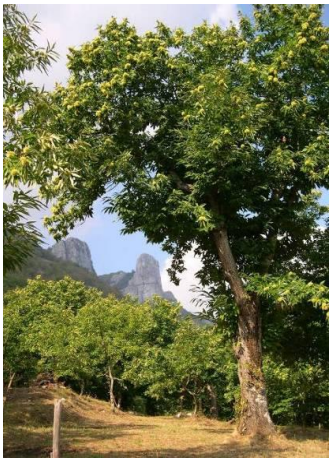
On this last walking day you will visit the northern side of the Alburni Mountains. You wander through thick forests, lovely countryside and medieval villages. In Sicignano you walk up to the ruins of the castle, an impressive viewpoint. One of the other villages has been completely abandoned and is now a ghost town with dramatic views over the plain. For those who feel like it, there is the chance to walk up into the 'real' mountains, with various (strenuous) walks to be done.

Accommodation: Sicignano degli Alburni - Agriturismo ***
Total walking distance: 12 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 550 m.

Day 9 – Departure

Unless you have booked an extension, the tour finishes after breakfast. You are brought to the train or bus station (transfer included), for your return to Salerno, Naples (airport) or Rome.

An extra night in any of the hotels can be booked upon request, as well as an extra night in Naples or Salerno and/or the Cilento/Amalfi Coast.

TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful, welcoming farmhouses (*'agriturismo'*), or in so-called '*locanda'* (the French '*auberge'*, or British '*inn'*), all small, characteristic family-run accommodations. All rooms have en-suite facilities.

All accommodations are on a **half board** basis. Therefore all evening meals are included; either on the premises of the hotel or *'agriturismo'* or in a nearby restaurant.

No picnic lunches are included in the tour price, but these can be prepared for you by the accommodation holders, or materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you'll be staying. On some occasions you have the option of having your lunch in a restaurant along the way.

Nights 1 & 2: The first nights are spent in Felitto, in a very good 'agriturismo' just outside the medieval village in a beautiful green valley. Food is known to be very good and the farm produces its own full-bodied red wine.

Night 3: The next accommodation is a welcoming 'guesthouse' either right in the Valle dell'Angelo village square, or in the heart of Piaggine. Dinner will be in a nice 'Slow Food' restaurant.

Night 4: Tonight is spent in a nice guesthouse, right in the middle of Roscigno's old village centre. Dinner is at a nearby restaurant. Alternatively you can stay at a comfortable agriturismo, where dinner is on the premises of the agriturismo, as it features a superb restaurant, with a great choice of local specialties.

Nights 5 & 6: These nights are spent in a comfortable 'agriturismo' – a recently restored beautiful farmhouse with a swimming pool and nice restaurant, beautifully located just outside the little town of Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, to the southern side of the Alburni Mountains.

Nights 7 & 8: The final nights are spent in another nice 'agriturismo', just outside the little town of Sicignano, underneath the towering Alburni Mountains.

INCLUDED

- 8 nights accommodation - HB
- 2 nights Agriturismo in Felitto
- 1 night Agriturismo in Piaggine / B&B in Valle dell'Angelo
- 1 dinner in restaurant in Piaggine / Valle dell'Angelo
- 1 night B&B in Roscigno
- 2 nights Agriturismo in Sant'Angelo a Fasanella
- 2 nights Agriturismo in Sicignano degli Alburni
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale
- GPS tracks for each day
- Luggage transfer
- Private transfers as specified
- 24/7 h local assistance

NOT INCLUDED

- Departure taxes & Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips & Items of personal nature

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in FELITTO; a pick-up service (included) is arranged from Capaccio train station, which is easily reached from Naples, the nearest city with an international airport. The train journey takes about an hour.

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast in SICIGNANO. A short transfer brings you to the train or bus station (included), from where you travel on to your next destination.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Level: Moderately easy 2/3: Mostly moderately easy walks, though some involve uphill walking, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. Orientation can be difficult on occasions (but you can check out our route notes!). On some days extensions or shortcuts are possible.

Fitness: High standard of fitness is not necessary but you should be able to walk for up to 5-6 hours, even on a hot day in the sun on dusty or stony tracks.

FOOTPATHS & WAYMARKING

Footpaths: Most paths are relatively well maintained, but during the season some paths can get overgrown (*we are in continuous contact with local authorities to keep the paths clean – please help us with your feedback on the quality of the paths*).

Waymarking: Only a small part of the route is waymarked (partly by us); elsewhere you need to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these you will always be able to find your route. In case you don't feel confident a local guide can be provided for some trails.

TOUR VARIATIONS

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the accommodations en route.

At the beginning or the end of the tour there is also an opportunity to visit Paestum or Pompei, or spend some time on the beach. The tour can easily be combined with a possible journey along the coast of the Cilento or with a tour on the Amalfi Coast.

As well is it possible to extend your tour with a few days along the Amalfi Coast in Salerno or Naples (with the isle of Capri). Many good accommodations are available. Details & prices on request.
It is possible to include extra nights in any of the accommodations en route.

At the beginning or the end of the tour there is also an opportunity to visit Paestum or Pompeii, or spend some time on the beach. The tour can easily be combined with a possible journey along the coast of the Cilento or with a tour on the Amalfi Coast. The cities of Salerno and Naples (or the isle of Capri) can also be visited as an extension to the tour. Several good accommodations are available. Details & prices on request.

SHORTER & LONGER VERSIONS

A longer, 11-day version of this tour is also available: The heart of the Cilento National Park (11 days). On request we can also organise a 'continuous walking route', with a change in accommodation every day.

Bespoke, shorter or longer tours, suiting your agenda can be organised. Prices on request. Check out our other Cilento tours as well!

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